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New York

President:	Mr. Nebenzia/Mr. Polyanskiy	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Djédjé
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. French

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2018/521)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2018/521)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Allam-Mi is joining this meeting via video tele-conference from Manhasset, New York.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/521 which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.I now give the floor to Mr. Fall.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): The situation in Central Africa has remained difficult since the publication of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/521) that is before the members of the Security Council, with a number of serious threats to political, security and socioeconomic stability, including in countries affected by long-standing armed conflicts, such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) are either in the middle or at the beginning of an electoral cycle and, as a result, are experiencing tensions related to electoral processes. People everywhere continue to demand better socioeconomic conditions.

Demands for the engagement of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), good offices and preventive diplomacy have remained strong. I have intensified my engagement with countries in the subregion and our support to subregional organizations, including by leading or deploying more missions to redouble our efforts in conflict prevention and crisis management. Allow me to set out some of the new developments in the subregion.

The new Constitution adopted by the National Assembly of Chad was promulgatedon 4 May, and a new Government was sworn in on 10 May. President Idriss Deby Itno presided over a ceremony on 24 May to establish a new national framework for political dialogue, which includes 15 members of the majority and 15 members of the opposition. In coordination with our partners, UNOCA stands ready to support the national framework for political dialogue as it takes up the challenge of promoting inclusive dialogue and creating the conditions for credible and peaceful parliamentary elections in November.

The newly established electoral body in Gabon has begun preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections. During my meeting with the head of Gabon's central elections body on 18 May, I reiterated the readiness of the United Nations to support the electoral process. In order to improve the representation of women and youth in elected positions and decision-making bodies, UNOCA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supported the Gabonese network of women senators in organizing a training workshop in Libreville, from 5 to 7 June, which targeted women and youth political leaders.

Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza promulgated a new Constitution on 7 June, following the Constitutional Court's validation of the results of the referendum held on 17 May. Several stakeholders and partners expressed concern that reform could reverse the gains of the Arusha Agreement in terms of peace, stability, democracy and inclusive political participation. It is important that the Council continue to lend its support to the mediation process led by the East African Community. I reiterate Special Envoy Michel Kafando's call to the Government and the opposition to resume and conclude the talks as soon as possible and start preparing the ground for inclusive and credible elections in 2020.

The escalation of violence and tension in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon, which are also still affected by Boko Haram's activities and the impact of the crisis in the Central African Republic, is a source of major concern. More than 20,000 Cameroonian refugees have already been registered across the border

in Nigeria and are in need of assistance. On 25 May, seven English-speaking activists were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison on terrorism and other charges. The United Nations has consistently called for an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders as the best way to find a solution to the crisis, respond to the grievances of the English-speaking population and guarantee the territorial integrity of the country and regional stability. I congratulate the national commission for the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism for its efforts, and encourage it to continue its work and duly note the public's recommendations. Diffusing tensions will also contribute to the proper holding of the presidential, legislative and municipal elections scheduled for this year. In that regard, the United Nations will continue to call on all actors to refrain from further acts of violence.

A series of trials took place in the Republic of Congo involving political leaders arrested following the 2016 presidential election, resulting in long prison sentences for several of them including 20 years for General Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko, former Chief of Staff of the army and a former presidential candidate. While progress has been made in advancing the peace process in the Pool region, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is progressing more slowly than expected. The United Nations will continue to support that process with other partners.

Tensions continued to erupt in Sao Tome and Principe following a decision by the majority-controlled National Assembly on 4 May to remove judges from the Supreme Court of Justice because of differences over the Supreme Court's decision to return the country's brewery, Rosema, to an Angolan investor. The National Assembly approved a resolution on 23 May on the appointment of new Supreme Court judges, which was subsequently adopted on 30 May. On the following day, the opposition parties asked the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality of the law.

The crisis in the Central African Republic continues to have a negative impact on the situation in the subregion, particularly in neighbouring countries, causing a large number of refugees. However, I am encouraged by the findings of the second phase of consultations with armed groups, conducted by the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. I hope that the results of those consultations will lead to tangible improvements in the security situation. I urge the countries of the region to participate more actively in the African Initiative, both politically and financially. I also strongly encourage the Central African authorities and neighbouring countries to accelerate the process of establishing joint commissions, which could address issues such as border control and transhumance. I will continue to focus my efforts on mobilizing support for the African Initiative.

On 11 June, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea invited all legally registered and unregistered parties, civil society and the diaspora to participate in a national political dialogue scheduled for July. I congratulate the President on his initiative and look forward with great interest to the results of that dialogue, which could further open up political space in the country.

(*spoke in English*)

The scourge of terrorism and violent extremism continues to affect populations of the subregion and to lead to the diversion of Government resources from much-needed development programmes to costly security operations. Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army have not stopped their deadly attacks on civilians, committing egregious human rights abuses and causing countless victims. UNOCA is engaging subregional organizations, including the ECCAS secretariat, the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Multinational Joint Task Force and other stakeholders, to fight Boko Haram and address related issues and, more broadly, violent extremism in the subregion, including to facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy against Boko Haram. I also continue liaising closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, for coordinated support to regional efforts to address the Lake Chad basin crisis.

On 8 and 9 May, the Lake Chad basin governors' forum for regional cooperation on stabilization, peacebuilding and sustainable development held its inaugural meeting in Maiduguri, Nigeria. The governors established the forum as a platform for regional cooperation on stabilization, peacebuilding and sustainable development in the area affected by Boko Haram. The forum, which is supported by UNOCA, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the Sahel and UNDP, will convene at least once a year.

Violent extremism, ongoing cross-border insecurity and criminal activities are compounded by the flow of

small arms and light weapons throughout the subregion. In response to that challenge, the first conference of States parties to the Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly — the Kinshasa Convention — is taking place right now in Yaoundé, with the participation of UNOCA. The Convention was developed through the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), with UNOCA support.

In its capacity as secretariat of UNSAC, UNOCA supported the holding of the forty-sixth ministerial meeting of the Committee, held in Brazzaville from 29 May to 1 June. The forum provides a unique decision-making platform for discussing the overall political, security and socioeconomic situation in the subregion. The heads and representatives of United Nations peace operations in the subregion — including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Great Lakes Region and UNOWAS — also attended the meeting, in recognition of the need for promoting cooperation and coherence among United Nations entities on the ground. UNSAC recommended that ECCAS expedite the implementation of the regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, which was adopted at the forty-first meeting of UNSAC, held in 2015.

I welcome the endorsement, on 24 May, of the regional action plan for the implementation in Central Africa of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, following a two-day workshop organized by ECCAS and UNOCA in Brazzaville. Resource mobilization will be critical to ensuring the successful implementation of the plan. I am convinced that the participation of women and youth will be crucial to ensuring a successful ECCAS and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) joint summit, which is expected to take place in July, under the theme "Peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism within the ECCAS-ECOWAS space." I call upon ECCAS and ECOWAS member States to ensure that women and youth are involved in developing and implementing strategies to prevent violent extremism and terrorism, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. UNOCA and UNOWAS will continue to support ECCAS and ECOWAS in a coordinated manner.

Consistent with its mandate, UNOCA has remained actively engaged in support of Central African Member States and subregional organizations, in particular ECCAS. At their joint meeting on 11 and 12 May, ECCAS and UNOCA adopted a biennial programme for the period 2018-2019 that includes additional joint visits to the subregion and joint analysis to promote enhanced coordination in conflict prevention and management and peacebuilding. I welcome the decision of ECCAS member States to accelerate the reform of the institution. I call upon ECCAS member States to remain committed to completing that important process. The reform is a good opportunity for the subregional organization to improve its functioning, including that of its funding mechanism, to ensure the implementation of key projects on peace, security, peacebuilding and governance. The United Nations, including through UNOCA, stands ready to provide assistance to ECCAS and Member States in that critical endeavour.

Since its mandate was last renewed, in 2015, UNOCA has proved its effectiveness as a tool for advancing the Secretary-General's prevention agenda in Central Africa. The activities of the Office have also been crucial to strengthening the capacity of ECCAS in enhancing United Nations coordination in the subregion. We look forward to the Security Council's support for UNOCA's mandate-renewal for another three years, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Fall for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Allam-Mi.

Mr. Allam-Mi (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to participate via video-teleconference in today's important meeting to consider the fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on Central Africa (S/2018/521). Allow me to thank the Russian presidency of the Security Council for inviting me to speak.

I should like to recall that the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is one of the eight regional economic communities that make up the pillars of African integration. Founded in 1983, ECCAS is a geographical space covering 6.6 million square kilometres, where more than 160 million people

live. Its goal is to promote and strengthen harmonious cooperation and balanced development across all socioeconomic areas in its 11 member States. Its members are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and São Tomé and Príncipe. That is a major goal with many challenges, which we sincerely hope to overcome with the support of our international partners, in particular the United Nations. Our main priorities are infrastructure, the environment and peace and security-related issues, which did not feature as part of the goals of ECCAS at the time of its establishment. ECCAS was forced to address issues relating to peace and security as it emerged from a period of inertia between 1992 and 1998 because of the violent wars in seven of its 10 member States during that time. ECCAS goals were strengthened in February 1999 with the aim of preventing and resolving conflict through the establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa and with the support of the United Nations, within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Issues in Central Africa.

In addition to Council for Peace and Security protocols, other legal instruments and normative frameworks were established to provide ECCAS with a robust, diversified and operational peace and security architecture. The Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly is the most recent of those instruments. It was adopted on 30 April 2010 in Kinshasa and entered into force in March 2017. The peace and security architecture of ECCAS works, of course, in line with the African Union Peace and Security Architecture; the results could be improved upon, but they are already encouraging.

Thanks to this architecture, ECCAS has been able to take concrete steps on the ground. It deployed its first peace missions in the Central African Republic, the first and second Missions for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic, between 2008 and 2013, with 2,600 staff in 2013, at the height of the crisis, before the African Union and the United Nations took over with the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic and then the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Given the continuing threat to the security of the subregion posed by the situation in the country, ECCAS remains seized of the situation in the Central African Republic and continues to express its solidarity with that Member State. In that regard, it participates fully in the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which requires multifaceted support from the international community.

With regard to maritime safety and security, the Central African subregion now hosts, in Yaoundé, the Interregional Coordination Centre for Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea, which is entrusted with implementing the strategy developed by the States of the Gulf of Guinea, through their regional institutions: ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, with, of course, ongoing support from the United Nations.

The most recent meeting of the high leadership of the three organizations was held on 5 April 2018 to decide on the budget and fine-tune the process for organizing a meeting with contributing third parties, with the technical support of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

In the area of combating terrorism in all of its manifestations, and in harmony with the global strategy adopted by the United Nations, ECCAS undertook major initiatives, including the development, with the support of UNOCA, of a subregional strategy on combating terrorism. It was endorsed at the ministerial level and will very soon be submitted to the Heads of State and Government for their approval.

Along those same lines, the long-awaited joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit on the issue of violent extremism is scheduled to take place on 30 July, with the technical support of UNOCA and UNOWAS. A cooperation framework between ECCAS and ECOWAS is being finalized and should be signed by the heads of both bodies before the summit. I should like to point out here that a document on a strategy to combat transboundary organized crime and mercenary activities is also being developed by ECCAS, in line with the request from the Security Council.

In the institutional area, ECCAS began an in-depth reform, on the basis of a decision by the Heads of State and Government on 25 May 2015. The process should lead to new foundational texts, in particular a revised treaty and other texts. The process is going well; the plan is for draft texts to be provided to us by a study group in July. The adoption and signing of the texts by the Heads of State and Government is likely to take place during a special summit that we are planning to hold at the end of 2018 or early 2019. Within the framework of this reform, it is planned to transform the General Secretariat into a commission and to create a standing peace and security council at ECCAS headquarters.

On the overall political, security and humanitarian situation in Central Africa today, we cannot but acknowledge that despite the many efforts and real advances made in recent years, Central Africa remains a region of crises and armed conflicts, open or latent. It is also particularly affected by the political crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and by the political, security and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic, as well as by the activities of terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin.

In this regard, I would like to welcome the high-quality report that the Secretary-General presented on the situation in Central Africa. I also am very pleased to see that the contribution made by the ECCAS General Secretariat was largely taken into account in the drafting of the report. Indeed, the excellent cooperation that exists between UNOCA and the ECCAS General Secretariat, as well as my excellent relationship with the Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, my brother Fall, whose presence I welcome at this meeting, have made it possible to carry out jointly activities and missions on the ground.

We have a framework of cooperation that includes plans for periodic common activities. The last such plan was finalized during a common retreat we organized in May. I will not to go into detail on the fourteenth report of the Secretary-General, but I should like to note that certain developments must be taken into account.

In Burundi, President Nkurunziza announced that he would not run for President in 2020. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the International Criminal Court acquitted the former Vice-President, Jean-Pierre Bemba, and in the Central African Republic, there is, on the one hand, reason to be encouraged by the involvement of former heads of Central African States in supporting the African initiative, but, on the other hand, reason to be concerned because of the renewed violence in Bangui and within the country. This is worrying and something that we must act upon, given the seriousness of the situation. In this regard, I reiterate ECCAS's condemnation of all acts of violence, in particular those perpetrated against MINUSCA.

Lastly, the political, security and humanitarian situation in the subregion will be at the very heart of the consultative meeting of the Heads of State and Government of ECCAS, which President Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon and the current Chairman of ECCAS, will convene on the margins of the African Union summit planned for 1 and 2 July in Nouakchott.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Allam-Mi for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council wishing to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I wish to thank our briefers today — Ambassador Fall for his report and for his team's work in this challenging region, and Ambassador Allam-Mi for his comments. I welcome him to the Security Council; it is good to see him today, because regional organizations like his are essential, and we are pleased that he has been able to demonstrate today the cooperation between the regional group and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

The United Kingdom remains concerned by the security and political situation in Central Africa. Many of those concerns are reflected in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/521), including the threats from terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and other groups in the Lake Chad basin and the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We note with horror the use of women and girls as suicide bombers by Boko Haram.

As we have discussed on many previous occasions in the Security Council, both military and non-military action is required so as to address such threats. We must understand their root causes and the political, economic and humanitarian needs of the population. It is essential that we adopt a coherent and whole-of-United Nations approach in order both to tackle the existing problems and to prevent further deterioration in the region.

Ten million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the Lake Chad basin this year. The United Kingdom has committed £300 million to tackling the crisis over the next five years. We call on other international donors to help to make up the funding shortfalls for humanitarian operations across the region.

We are also concerned about the situation in Cameroon and the number of casualties that have resulted among both civilians and the Cameroon security forces. Citizens have the right to peaceful protest. It is the Government's responsibility to protect demonstrators, while also protecting the safety and security of all citizens. We call for all parties to reject violence, pursue dialogue and urgently take action to reduce tensions. Failure to do so will only cause the already concerning situation to deteriorate further.

In that regard, we welcome the New Year announcement by President Biya to pursue dialogue, decentralization and restraint. We strongly encourage the Government to take further steps to give effect to that announcement. We commend the support of UNOCA as part of broader international efforts to find a lasting solution to the current crisis. We would encourage the intensification of those efforts. We ask that we be kept regularly informed on progress.

We recognize the efforts of UNOCA in other areas in the region, including the mobilization of support for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic with regional partners. We encourage such support to continue. UNOCA also has a crucial role in supporting States in the subregion to hold timely, transparent and inclusive elections and the efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa to lay the groundwork for the structural prevention of election-related violence.

We are concerned about the threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and we appreciate UNOCA reporting on that matter. Further and more detailed reporting on the problem and the work being done to combat it should be carried out given the heightened and significant threat to international shipping and regional prosperity.

In addition to regional Governments, regional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, are essential to addressing the challenges to peace and security, promoting democratic governance and enhancing regional cooperation. Interregional cooperation, particularly on issues such as the Sahel, are also crucial. We welcome the announcement that ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States will hold a joint summit in July. We encourage UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel to continue to support that interregional approach.

UNOCA has demonstrated that it can be a valuable partner to regional Governments and organizations. In order to make the best use of the resources available, UNOCA should focus on building the capacity of regional entities to deliver crisis-prevention work, such as preventative diplomacy, early-warning mechanisms and mediation, and to support United Nations agencies in priority thematic areas, including gender.

The United Kingdom appreciates the efforts of UNOCA in the region. We encourage UNOCA to improve its communication of that good work. That would ensure that those outside the United Nations system can better understand UNOCA's ongoing work and support it wherever possible.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatoral Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, to thank Mr. François Fall, my brother, and the entire team of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for the detailed and informative briefing on the situation in that region, for which we express our full support. We also welcome Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States, and thank him for his briefing.

We would like to begin our statement by condemning in the strongest terms the 10 June attack perpetrated against a patrol of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which resulted in the death of one member of the peacekeeping contingent of Burundi and left another injured. We convey our condolences in that regard.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/521). We believe that since 2011, the date on which it assumed the functions of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, UNOCA has faced many challenges that undermine peace, security and political stability in our subregion.

As I have said earlier, we support the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa in his decisive role in the prevention and

mitigation of election-related crises and the promotion of inclusive political dialogue and reform processes in several countries of our region.

Today, the international community again faces a new outbreak of Ebola virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there have already been more than 20 deaths. That situation poses new challenges and requires prompt coordination at a time when the international community is focused on the electoral process in the country. We hope that the outbreak can be controlled very soon.

The political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic poses challenges to the subregion, which, we believe, should be resolved through direct national dialogue supported by the international community and regional and subregional organizations with measures to strengthen State authority and to alleviate poverty, that is to say, political solutions together with economic measures. At the same time, synergies must be combined to combat negative trends, such as the Lord's Resistance Army. The international community must condemn any neglect of the situation and not allow that group of mercenaries to become more active and operational. In that regard, the African Union continues to call for international assistance to support the forces that are still fighting that armed group, which has taken refuge on the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

My country's Government also continues to be concerned about the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. That group of religious fundamentalists has now become a threat not only to the countries of the Lake Chad Basin but to all West Africa. It is also a threat to international peace and security. For more than eight years, after spreading terror in Nigeria, Boko Haram has increased its activities, in many cases using children and young women in suicide attacks, affecting countries of our subregion, such as Cameroon and Chad. It is also necessary to point out that, while the Islamist group has been weakened militarily since 2015 thanks to the joint action of the armies of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, today the group has withdrawn to Lake Chad. However, unfortunately, it is still a strong destructive force. The international community must continue to support the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union in planning future operations against that terrorist group.

We also urge the neighbouring States and other States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to ensure regional cooperation to investigate and to combat the criminal networks and armed groups involved in the illegal exploitation and smuggling of natural resources, such as gold, diamonds, poaching and trafficking in species of wild fauna and flora. We hope that the region can soon re-establish itself.

Urgent action by the international community on implementing measures to deal with the humanitarian situation in those countries, as well as with Boko Haram's activities, is essential to ensuring that they can continue to receive aid and enable them to cope with their humanitarian crisis, one of the major consequences of the problems affecting the area.

My Government has taken note of the statement by President Pierre Nkunrunziza of Burundi regarding his decision not to run for office in 2020, despite the fact that the country's Constitution would enable him to run again. Equatorial Guinea would like to take this opportunity to call on the Burundian authorities to consolidate their political process, which will be crucial to the forthcoming elections. We also urge them to resume inclusive dialogue under the auspices of the countries of the region and in the spirit of the Arusha Accords.

While some progress has been made in the region, in general the situation remains volatile owing to a resurgence in violence and the continuing activity and presence of armed groups in the Central African Republic and its neighbours, which are unfortunately undermining State authority and whose effects have a direct impact on neighbouring countries. That was in fact the case with the failed attempt at a coup in my country on 28 December 2017, in which a group of foreign mercenaries infiltrated my country with the aim of using violence to change our constitutional order. That and other similar actions, which do nothing but disturb regional peace, security and stability, have been firmly rejected by the people of Equatorial Guinea, who support respect for constitutional order and the strengthening of their democratic institutions.

This is not the first time that my country has suffered similar attempts, as we have repeatedly pointed out in this Chamber. We realize that our regional mechanisms for preventing conflict should be strengthened. Otherwise we could see even more serious situations

arise that would certainly not help to bring peace to an already very complex region. One possible measure for preventing conflict, as Mr. Fall mentioned, is the conference on the Central African Convention on the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons. We know that trafficking in small arms and light weapons helps to expand and prolong conflicts in the region, and it is therefore an issue that should be given major attention.

This situation of instability and insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea emphasizes the importance of organizing an international conference on combating mercenaries. In that connection, the international community should become increasingly involved in preventing conflicts in the region by cooperating and supporting the efforts of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, essentially by focusing on maritime protection of the Gulf and on preventing and combating crime on the high seas in order to help avoid conflict and maintain peace in the region. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is definitely one of my Government's concerns, and in fact there will be an Arria Formula meeting on the subject this afternoon.

We support the continued strengthening of the cooperation framework signed in June 2016 between UNOCA and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). We stress the importance of closely monitoring the tripartite agreement signed on 23 May 2011 in Khartoum by Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan to enhance security in their common border areas, and we urge the main stakeholders — the United Nations, ECCAS, the African Union and the European Union — to redouble their efforts to resolve conflicts, consolidate State authority, protect civilians and arrive at negotiated solutions to the conflicts in the region while maintaining respect for the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries concerned.

We believe that UNOCA should continue to work hard to create synergies with the purpose of promoting bilateral cooperation among neighbouring countries and strengthening cooperation with regional and subregional organizations in the area of peace and security, particularly the African Union, ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. We welcome the announcement of the upcoming summit between ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States. As a country of the subregion covered by those regional and subregional communities and as a member of the subregional Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, Equatorial Guinea encourages all the Governments and political stakeholders involved to continue to maintain an inclusive internal dialogue with close regional and subregional cooperation, in the understanding that overcoming our challenges in the subregion in particular, and in Africa in general, will enable us to ultimately achieve the goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

These and other realities have led my Government to convene our sixth national political dialogue round table at the initiative of His Excellency President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, to be held in July, and to which we have invited all of Equatorial Guinea's political parties, whether legalized or not, as well as all Equatorial Guinean stakeholders and political activists both inside and outside the country. We will use the round table to discuss important issues such as economic prospects, human rights, democratization and the ongoing strengthening of national cohesion as an element that contributes to proactive national progress. These issues mark the guidelines that we have been outlining during our Council membership, defined as the peaceful settlement of conflict through dialogue. We want to reiterate our support to UNOCA once again. It is crucial to the efforts to stabilize our region.

Ms. French (United States): I would like to thank Special Representative Fall and Secretary-General Allam-Mi for their briefings today and for all their work in Central Africa, which is facing a challenging set of political, economic and social issues.

We would like to take this opportunity to focus on the situation in Cameroon, which demands the attention of both the Security Council and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). We are concerned about the fact that the situation continues to deteriorate, with increasing levels of violence, including against civilians, witnessed in the past few weeks. Recent press reports indicate that as many as 40 people were killed in the north-west region of the country in the last week of May. The stakes in Cameroon are too high for this crisis to continue without being addressed. Cameroon continues to be an essential security partner in the fight against Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa, including as a member of the Multinational Joint Task Force.

The ongoing crisis in the anglophone regions threatens to detract from our mutual security objectives in the region of the Lake Chad basin. If

confidence-building steps leading to a meaningful, broad-based dialogue are not taken now, tensions could increase further, leading to the potential for violence related to the forthcoming elections this autumn, and to the possibility that the legitimacy of the election results could be called into question. We have unfortunately seen far too many examples of tensions spiking in the Central African region during and after electoral processes, and it is clear that we will have to remain vigilant in that regard in the coming months in Cameroon.

While we welcomed President Biya's public commitment to dialogue at the beginning of this year, and while we recognize the initial work of Cameroon's commission for bilingualism and multiculturalism, we are concerned about the fact that there has been little progress to date towards a peaceful resolution. Most of the constitutional reforms of 1996 calling for decentralization, which may have helped to defuse tensions, have so far not been implemented. It is essential that all parties take steps immediately to de-escalate the crisis and protect civilians from harm. In that regard, we believe that Mr. Fall and UNOCA have an important role to play in engaging with all parties in Cameroon in order to encourage constructive engagement, accountability for the allegations of abuse, and a de-escalation of tensions. We look forward in the coming months to further discussions with the Council about the situation in Cameroon.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and we are grateful for the briefings given by Mr. Fall and Mr. Allam-Mi. We welcome the work they carry out under particularly difficult political and security conditions.

We wish to emphasize the importance of adopting regional and subregional approaches to addressing shared challenges, building sustainable peace and responding to the root causes of conflicts, and of the role played by the regional and subregional offices of the United Nations.

The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is an example in that regard, as it deploys good offices and coordinates and promotes agreement among relevant stakeholders, thereby contributing to the prevention and resolution of conflicts and humanitarian crises affecting over 11 million people, in addition to supporting various efforts and reforms in the development and strengthening of institutions. We commend the coordination and partnerships that UNOCA has established with the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Economic Community of West African States.

We look forward to the holding of elections in the five countries of Central Africa. We underscore the importance of political stability and the broad participation of citizens, especially women and young people, in those elections. Promoting inclusive and accountable institutions is essential to building sustainable peace. However, we must express our concern about the ongoing violence and numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law observed in the subregion. UNOCA's action should enable the international community to closely monitor the situation and promote prevention. We condemn and are particularly concerned about the ongoing terrorist threat of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin, including attacks on schools and the abuse and exploitation of women and children, as well as the actions of the so-called Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the joint strategy, under the auspices of ECCAS, aimed at preventing and combating terrorism, in particular measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and other activities linking terrorism to organized crime. The international community must staunchly support these efforts. We also welcome the reform of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa, and stress its complementarity with the counter-terrorism actions of the African Union and its coordination with the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations system.

We must recall that the subregion is facing a severe humanitarian crisis. Some 11 million people depend heavily on external assistance, and millions are also displaced by hunger and violence. The international community must redouble its efforts to address that vulnerable situation.

In conclusion, I would like to express Peru's support for the extension of the mandate of UNOCA and recognize once again the work it is doing to serve the people of Central Africa and to maintain international peace and security.

Mr. Djédjé (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Mr. François Louncény Fall and Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi for their excellent briefings and assures them of Côte d'Ivoire's support.

We welcome the progress made in recent years in several Central African countries. However, we remain concerned about the serious multifaceted political and security challenges, such as armed conflict, terrorism, poaching, transnational organized crime and maritime piracy.

In the Central African Republic, the renewed violence, including clashes between ethnic and religious communities and repeated attacks against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, continues to be a source of concern. The absence of State authority over a large swath of national territory, mercenary activities and illicit trafficking in natural resources and weapons are all challenges that have a negative impact on the security of the country and the entire region. The situation demands a coordinated response by the international community to address these challenges.

My delegation supports the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, conducted under the auspices of the African Union, whose effective implementation of the road map should enable significant progress to be made towards achieving a lasting solution to the crisis in that country. We also welcome the efforts undertaken by the President of the Central African Republic, Mr. Touadera, to promote constructive dialogue and consultation with a view to ensuring inclusive national reconciliation, which is essential to achieving lasting peace.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my delegation calls for the effective implementation of the 31 December agreement in order to ensure the holding of elections on 23 December. We welcome the progress that has been accomplished in that area. We further encourage the Congolese Government to do more to address the remaining challenges, in particular security issues, and to take the steps necessary to ease the sociopolitical environment as a precondition for peaceful elections.

With regard to the situation in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the results of the referendum on the constitutional review, held on 17 May. We call on all parties to resume inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue, under the auspices of the East African Community and within the framework of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, with a view to definitively overcoming the crisis.

The security situation in the Lake Chad basin is also a source of concern for my delegation in the light of the ongoing threat posed by Boko Haram, whose criminal activities extend to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. My country welcomes the upcoming implementation of the stabilization strategy for the Lake Chad region, which seeks to identify, prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate persons associated with Boko Haram and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017). My delegation also supports the strengthening of support for the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, in close collaboration with the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2018/521).

Côte d'Ivoire is also concerned about the actions of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which remains a threat to the safety of civilians, despite the fact that its operational capabilities have been reduced. Indeed, the movement regularly carries out kidnappings, looting, extrajudicial executions and sexual assaults, in particular in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation welcomes the extension of the mandate of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA by the African Union until 22 August. We invite the international community to support the military component of the Regional Cooperation Initiative, which remains a relevant mechanism for cooperation and coordination in the fight against the LRA.

The difficulties I have just noted show the need for the establishment of a regional cooperation strategy in order to provide an appropriate response to the challenges undermining Central Africa. In that regard, my country supports the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to promote peace and security, and welcomes the recent adoption by the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX) of the strategy to prevent and combat terrorism in the region, in accordance with the recommendation of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Côte d'Ivoire also encourages the implementation of the subregional strategy to combat mercenary activities and transnational organized crime

in Central Africa, as well as the adoption of subregional regulations on pastoralism, as decided by COPAX.

My delegation welcomes the good cooperation that exists between the subregional organizations ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), within the framework of shared experiences and mutual support in order to face the challenge of fighting instability. It attaches particular importance to the joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit on peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism, to be held in July. We hope that the conclusions of the summit will foster interregional synergies in addressing challenges related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, while strengthening the capacities of subregional institutions.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/521) provides us with useful insight into the excellent preventive diplomacy tool of UNOCA. Its activities over the past three years have led to considerable progress in the areas of security, peace and stability in Central Africa, including crisis prevention and mitigation, the promotion of dialogue and the implementation of inclusive political reforms, particularly in Chad, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe.

Faced with the challenges of consolidating peace and reviving sustainable development policies in Central Africa, UNOCA plays a vital role in supporting the efforts of the States and peoples of the subregion in their quest for peace, stability and development, especially through partnership strategies with other institutions, with a view to achieving unity of action and pooling working resources. In that context, we should encourage concrete action, such as the cooperation framework between ECCAS and UNOCA, signed on 14 June 2016 in New York. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the excellent collaboration between UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel in harmonizing the United Nations approach to peace and security in their respective subregions.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire supports the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. Its mission of good offices and preventive diplomacy remains relevant to the quest for peace, stability and socioeconomic development in the Central African States.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): My delegation thanks our briefers, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Fall and the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, for their informative updates and contributions to our deliberations today. We would like to make our observations and recommendations on some key and salient points.

First, Kazakhstan recognizes the importance of the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in line with the Secretary-General's new agenda for peace, inter alia, in the field of preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as the support it provides to regional and subregional organizations in achieving durable and long-term peace. We also note, despite the existing problems in the region, the efforts and commitments of the countries of the region to increase subregional integration and ongoing reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law and good governance.

On the other hand, we are particularly concerned by the tension in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. We support the efforts of the authorities of Cameroon, as well as UNOCA, the African Union and ECCAS, to address that issue. At the same time, we urge all parties involved to create all necessary conditions for the cessation of violence, and we stress the need to establish genuine and inclusive dialogue, rebuild trust and use confidence-building measures.

Secondly, with respect to the counter-terrorism track, we draw attention to the activities of Boko Haram and other extremist groups and organized crime networks. It is therefore important that the African Union, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the United Nations continue to work towards formulating and implementing a well-coordinated regional strategy to fight the root causes of the crisis, which is of a transnational nature expanding across borders. Simultaneously, if is to be effective and streamlined, the United Nations has to utilize a whole-of-system approach and deliver as one United Nations, with a strengthened security-development nexus for more enduring political and socioeconomic stability.

The regional States are encountering unprecedented challenges in combating terrorism. We support the efforts of UNOCA to coordinate the activities of regional organizations in that regard. We welcome the adoption of the ECCAS strategy to prevent and fight terrorism in Central Africa, developed under the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. In that vein, we call on all international partners — such as the Multinational Joint Task Force

in the Lake Chad area and the African Union Regional Task Force in the Central African region — to continue to support regional counter-terrorist forces.

Thirdly, the problem of the increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees in the region deserves special attention. That issue, along with a reduction in humanitarian access due to the lack of security for those in need of help, puts a heavy burden on host communities and countries against the backdrop of limited funding for humanitarian assistance. Moreover, outbreaks of epidemics worsen the situation. In that regard, what is needed is not only the support of international donors, but also the coordinated efforts of local Governments to ensure security and create the conditions for the voluntary return of refugees, with the full support of the United Nations system.

Lastly, we highly appreciate the coordinating role of UNOCA as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and its invaluable contribution to the maintenance of peace and security in the region. Still, much work remains to be done to consolidate the gains achieved. In that regard, we support the extension of the UNOCA mandate for the next three years.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), for their informative briefings. We stress the important role that both are playing in the region.

Bolivia commends and acknowledges the work that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) has been carrying out in the areas of preventive diplomacy, elections assistance, mediation and confidence-building measures, as well as the support it provides to regional and subregional organizations in order to contribute to the reduction of tensions in the region. That work should not be overlooked, but must continue to be deepened with the cooperation of regional and subregional partners under the principle of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each of the States where it implements its mandate.

Such efforts must be made to address the remaining challenges in the areas of peace and security, humanitarian assistance and economic development, the complexity of which implies that they must be addressed through a joint strategy between UNOCA, the United Nations country teams and regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union (AU), ECCAS, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, the Gulf of Guinea Commission and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. It is alongside those organizations that current and emerging threats must be addressed in order to reduce their potential impact on the stability of the subregion.

In that regard, we warmly welcome the consultative meeting of the Heads of State of ECCAS within the framework of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, at which they agreed to convene a session of the Assembly of Heads of State of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). Similarly, we commend the work conducted by the COPAX Council of Ministers at its fifth ordinary session, at which it adopted, inter alia, a strategy to prevent and combat terrorism in Central Africa and another to combat mercenary activities and transnational crime.

We also commend the ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States on their consultation meeting in Lomé. During that meeting, it was noted that both organizations would organize a summit on peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism in July. We highlight the initiative of President Bongo Odimba, who, in his capacity as ECCAS Chair, visited several countries of the region for discussions on security and regional integration. In that context, we believe that, although the situation is different in each country, conflicts in the region must be resolved through mediation, preventive diplomacy and primarily through constructive and inclusive political dialogue.

In line with previous remarks, we reiterate that we must consider the possibility of replicating the initiative of the Group of Five for the Sahel in Central Africa in order to address security challenges and combat terrorism within an institutional and regional cooperation and coordination framework. In that context, we highlight the progress made by the Multinational Joint Task Force and regional and international partners in their fight against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. We also underscore the efforts of the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, which, with the support of various United Nations entities, resulted in a conference in N'Djamena to develop a coordinated regional approach to find,

bring to trial, rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals affiliated with Boko Haram and Da'esh, in line with resolution 2349 (2017). We believe that in order to address those challenges, countries of the region and the international community as a whole must determine the root causes of such challenges. One cause is the lack of control over the use of natural resources, which are used to finance the illegal activities of groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army — an armed group that remains a threat to the security of civilians in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We implore the international community to consider the humanitarian situation in the subregion. In the Lake Chad basin region alone, approximately 10 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees are vulnerable to food insecurity, diseases, such as Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the lack of basic services. In addition, Bolivia notes that another factor that fosters peacebuilding in the region is the increased participation of women in the decision-making process. We encourage UNOCA to continue its efforts in that regard and in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Lastly, it is necessary and vital to continue to redouble efforts to galvanize political, technical and financial support in order to achieve peace, stability and development in Central Africa. In that regard, support for the work of UNOCA must continue. Its next mandate will focus on preparing for the prevention of elections-related violence and for other preventive diplomacy, peace and security and mediation efforts. We believe it is important to renew its mandate for another three years.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Fall, for his briefing on the activities of his Office and his assessment of key trends with regard to developments in the political and security situation of the Central African region. We recognize the important work carried out by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in utilizing good offices, preventive diplomacy in mediation, as well as the support it provides to the United Nations and regional and subregional initiatives related to peace and security in the region.

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States, Mr. Allam-Mi, for his briefing. We appreciate his work and contribution.

As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/521) mentions, the situation in the Central African region continues to be extremely worrying and therefore requires our utmost attention. Terrorism remains a major concern in the region and is exacerbated by prolonged conflicts, a governance deficit and the weakening of central authority and State institutions. Transnational organized crime that is intimately intertwined with terrorist and armed group activities, such as those of Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army, continue to affect the stability of the region. At this juncture, I would like to condemn in the strongest terms the repeated attacks carried out against peacekeepers who are working under difficult conditions and facing enormous challenges in the region. We express our sympathy in solidarity with the families of the victims of those attacks and we hope that those who perpetrated those heinous acts will be held to account.

The deteriorating political, security, socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, which also has an adverse impact on the wider region, clearly attests to the fragile situation in the country. It has the potential to reverse the limited gains made recently and plunge the country into another cycle of violence and conflict. While we recognize the various steps taken by the Government to extend State authority, undertaking institutional reforms and the gradual operationalization of the defence and security forces, there is an urgent need to reverse the spiral of violence in various parts of the country by promoting peace and reconciliation. Ensuring broader and more inclusive dialogue, as well as reconciliation among various communities, is important to addressing the challenges faced by the country. We therefore believe that the Government needs greater support to work within the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, which remains the only framework for peace and dialogue in the Central African Republic.

At the centre of the problem in the Central African region is the threat posed by Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). As the report of the Secretary-General states, Boko Haram remains a threat in the Lake Chad basin. Although severely degraded, the Lord's Resistance Army remains active

in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While we were all reminded of the causes of the security vacuum created and the setbacks in fighting the Lord's Resistance Army, we are nonetheless appreciative of the Congolese contingent of the Regional Task Force and its commitment to fighting the LRA on its territory. We believe that enhanced political, diplomatic and operational support is critical for that operation. Similarly, the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic should be commended. We call upon the Security Council to strengthen its mandate to enable it to respond to the evolving situation on the ground.

With regard to Boko Haram, despite its weakened position, the security and humanitarian damage it continues to inflict on the Lake Chad basin countries has continued. Enhancing political support and mobilizing resources for the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram is therefore very critical in order to considerably weaken the capability of the terrorist group and continue to successfully dislodge it from its strongholds. All of that makes it very critical that the peace and security of the Central African region be followed up closely, perhaps more than has been the case so far. It is important that the stability of the countries of the region that have maintained peace for a long period of time be upheld. We believe that UNOCA has a major responsibility in this regard, but, of course, it also needs the support of the international community to be able to discharge its responsibilities.

At the same time, we continue to call on all stakeholders to exercise restraint in their activities and to refrain from further acts that could undermine the possibilities for mutual cooperation. Nor should we overlook the recent developments to which the representative of Equatorial Guinea referred, to the effect that the activities of mercenaries have not ceased to be a problem, including in this region.

We believe that the efforts made by the Government and the people of Cameroon towards a peaceful settlement of the challenges they face through an inclusive and meaningful dialogue and national reconciliation should receive the necessary support. Similarly, the international community should give primacy to quiet diplomacy, carefully handling issues such as this one, and we recommend also the use of the good offices of the Secretary-General in that regard and appreciate the initiative that he has already taken. We seriously believe that while preventive measures should always be given primacy, it is equally critical to refrain from dramatizing situations, which might end up aggravating problems. That is why quiet diplomacy is always more productive.

Finally, we wish to reiterate that it is our firm conviction that UNOCA plays a critical role in supporting the various efforts made by the countries of the subregion to reduce tensions in a peaceful manner, through inclusive and authentic dialogue processes. To that end, we strongly support the renewal of UNOCA's mandate. In the light of the many challenges that the Central African region is facing, it appears only logical and proper for the international community to do more to help UNOCA and help address this challenge. We are asking UNOCA to do more; while doing so we should also take the steps necessary to enhance its capacity.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I, too, would like to start by thanking Special Representative Fall and the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Ambassador Allam-Mi, for their very useful briefings to the Council today.

As we have heard this morning, the Central African region continues to face a number of challenges. These include electoral processes and related challenges to political space. Underdevelopment and the humanitarian situation in the region are also a source of concern. Taken together, the situation deserves our and the region's continued attention, as it serves as an early warning sign of even greater challenges down the line.

In such circumstances, the role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in conflict prevention, including through its good offices and support for regional cooperation and integration, is, of course, of vital importance. Regional offices are one of the most effective operational tools that the United Nations has to prevent conflict. They should be supported, strengthened and multiplied. In this regard, the Council has an important role to play, in particular by standing by our envoys. We would like to express our full support for the efforts of Special Representative Fall and his team in UNOCA today.

Regional organizations such as ECCAS not only play a critical role in promoting integration and development, but also are key to preventing conflict and promoting peace. We therefore encourage continued support for building the capacities of regional organizations in the Central African region. We also

welcome the increased collaboration between ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including the upcoming summit.

We remain deeply concerned by the dire security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic and welcome the joint visit undertaken by ECOWAS and the Secretary-General of ECCAS. We also welcome the joint United Nations-African Union visit to the Central African Republic in April. It is important that the United Nations continue to promote and support the African Union and ECCAS-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation and the Libreville road map.

We are concerned that the situation in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon remains unresolved. The need to address long-standing grievances is evident. In order to move forward peacefully, it is important that all parties act responsibly, refrain from acts of violence and contribute to the upholding of human rights, as well as to an open and inclusive dialogue, not least regarding the question of decentralization. The situation in Cameroon has direct implications for peace in the broader subregion, and we must therefore continue to follow the situation closely, including in the light of the upcoming elections. The continued engagement of the Special Representative will be essential, and he has our full support in those efforts.

Sweden supported the organization of the Lake Chad governors' forum on peacebuilding, prevention, stabilization and regional cooperation, held in Maiduguri in May. That successful meeting was preceded by consultations with more than 1,000 women, men and young people from communities around the lake, including religious groups. This consultation and the forum itself clearly highlighted the need for a holistic, regional approach to address the root causes of the lack of peace and stability in the region, including the adverse effects of climate change.

The main outcome of this process was to establish the governors' forum as a vehicle for recurrent dialogue between the governors of the States affected, aimed at improving coordination and cross-border collaboration. We hope that these and other efforts to follow up on resolution 2349 (2017), on the Lake Chad basin region, will benefit the development of the regional stabilization strategy.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. François Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States, for their comprehensive briefings.

Allow me to focus on three aspects: the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region.

We commend the important work carried out by UNOCA in terms of good offices, mediation and preventive diplomacy as well as in support of the United Nations and regional and subregional initiatives to achieve peace and security in the region.

Nevertheless, the recent developments in Central Africa highlight the volatile nature of the political, security and social situation in the subregion. The root causes of the aforementioned problems in this area require an urgent response, especially by promoting good governance and economic reforms.

Bearing in mind the upcoming elections at various levels planned in several countries of the region, we expect that the Governments of those States will work towards the conduct of timely, inclusive, credible and peaceful electoral processes and will ensure the participation of women and young people.

The unstable situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Central African Republic as well as the recent developments in Cameroon are of particular concern to us. Poland believes that international and regional support for State-building and stabilization in those countries are crucial, not only from their own perspective but also from the perspective of the entire subregion.

While we appreciate the achievements to date, we are still concerned that the Lord's Resistance Army and Boko Haram pose a serious threat to security across significant parts of the region. That demonstrates that international initiatives aimed at combating those organizations require continued support, particularly from the Multinational Joint Task Force and the African Union Regional Task Force.

We condemn all acts of violence committed in the central African region, including the recruitment of children into military ranks and sexual and gender-based violence. The conflicts and the unstable situation in some central African States are the main cause of the

humanitarian crisis in the region. A proper response to the challenges in that regard requires the smooth and comprehensive coordination of all parties engaged in maintaining stability and peace on the ground, as well as a constructive dialogue with the local authorities.

Poland calls for the immediate cessation of all attacks on humanitarian personnel, especially medical staff working in crisis hospitals, and for allowing them full access so as to carry out their mandate and deliver essential aid to the affected people. We fully support the actions undertaken by the United Nations, as well as the European Union. At the same time, Poland recognizes the key role of regional partners and organizations. We commend their efforts to address the challenges to peace and security and to enhance regional cooperation.

In conclusion, we share the reflections contained in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNOCA (S/2018/521). We would again like to express our support for Special Representative Mr. Fall and for the further extension of the mandate of UNOCA.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.